

SUBSTANCE
OF
A SERMON
AGAINST
DRUNKENNESS,
PREACHED TO THE CATHOLICS OF DIVERS PARTS
OF
NEW SOUTH WALES.

BY THE
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SUBMITTED TO THE CONSIDERATION OF
THE VERY REV. THEOBALD MATHEW,
&c. &c. &c.

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I have read this Sermon on the Horrors of Drunkenness, printed and published by RICHARD COYNE, and I highly approve of its circulation among all classes, particularly those in the humbler walks of life.

THEOBALD MATHEW.

Imperial Hotel, Dublin,
April 4, 1840.

A SERMON.

“He that is temperate shall prolong life.”—ECCLES. xxxvii. 34.

“Let us cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light: let us walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness.”—St. Paul to the ROMANS, xiii. 12., and GAL. v.

“Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and that day come upon you suddenly.”—LUKE, xxi. 34.

WHAT is a drunkard? A Christian is one who follows and practises the virtues of Christ. An angel is a pure creature, that contemplates and enjoys God. A man is a creature that thinks and reasons. A brute is a creature that follows its appetite indeed, but never goes to excesses beyond the bounds of order. What is a drunkard? I have gone through the whole of creation that lives, and I find nothing in it like the drunkard. He enjoys no happiness, like the angels; he is not preparing himself for happiness, like the Christian; he does not think or reason, like a man; he keeps not his appetite within the bounds of nature, like the brute. What then is the drunkard? The drunkard is nothing but the drunkard. There is no other thing in nature to which he can be likened.

This is not a subject on which we can be allowed to soften down the truth in our words until it becomes falsehood.

The drunkard is a self-made wretch, who has depraved, and gratified the depraved cravings of the throat of his body, until he has sunk his soul so far that it is lost in his flesh, and has sunk his very flesh beyond comparison, lower than that of the animals which serve him: a self-degraded creature, whose degradation is made manifest to every one but himself; a self-made miserable being, who whilst he is insensible to his own misery, afflicts every one else with misery around him or belonging to him. He differs from the madman only in this—because the madman has not caused his own calamity, whilst this man has; because the madman is innocent, whilst this man is guilty. The madman is an object for pity, and compassion, and all the cares of humanity; whilst the drunkard is an object of ridicule, scorn, contempt; a butt for the world to play its follies at; a stock for the world's laughter; a ball for its game of mockery; a tool for the knave's cheatery, and the harlot's wilery; an instrument in the hand of hell's malignity. The madman is placed in security, he can be guarded against injuring himself or others. The drunkard is let loose upon mankind, like some foul, ill-boding, and noxious animal, to pester, torment, and disgust everything that reasons or feels; whilst the curse of God hangs over his place, and the gates of heaven are closed against him. “*Be not deceived,*” says the apostle, “*neither fornicators, nor idolaters, NOR DRUNKARDS, shall possess the kingdom of heaven.*” It is not I, it is St. Paul who classes the drunkard in such company, and shuts the gates against him. An outcast! the woes of heaven fall thick and fast upon him. “*Who hath woe?*” asks Solomon, “*whose father hath woe? who hath contentions? who fall into pits? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? Surely they that pass their time in wine, and study to drink up their cups.*” “*Woe to you,*” says Isaias, “*woe to you that rise up early in the morning to follow drunkenness, and to drink until the evening to be inflamed.*” *Woe*

to you that are mighty to drink wine, and are stout men at drunkenness. Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkenness of Ephraim; the drunkenness of Ephraim shall be trodden under foot." Are not these woes written on the face of the drunkard? Are they not heard in all his acts? Knows he what he says, or what he says not? Has not prudence left the guard of his tongue? Is there any gate to his mouth, any bar to his lips? Are not the secrets of the past, and the follies of the present, and foetid fumes of the liquor, and the foul thoughts from the tempter, mingled together, and poured out upon all around him? The very animal powers sink under drunkenness. It darkens the senses, as well as the soul, and deadens the feelings, as well as the mind; weakens, stupifies, sickens, shatters the frame of the animal man, as well as the frame of the rational man; deprives him of God, deprives him of heaven, deprives him of honour, cuts him off from human respect, casts him away from the friendship of men, destroys his fortune, ruins his family, deprives him of himself, kills all his good here, and all his hope hereafter, and bloats his body with premature disease, to fatten the worms and enrich the rankness of the grave-yard.

A Holy Father has described this condition as truly as briefly. "Drunkenness," he says, "is a willing fury, a traitor of thoughts, a ridiculous calamity, a voluntary demon, a state worse than madness." Would you know how the drunkard is worse than the demoniac? We pity the tormented demoniac; we abhor the drunkard. We condole with the one; we are indignant and irritated at the other. The snares of an enemy have possessed the demoniac; his own counsels have possessed the drunkard. With the demoniac he is driven about a slave by his possessor; with the demoniac he is fallen from his state of mind and manhood; with him he staggers, falls, rolls a dis-

gusting eye, foams and exhales nauseousness. He is disagreeable to his friends, ridiculous to his enemies, contemptible to his servants, loathsome to his wife, scandalous to his children—odious to all. Whilst all that call him acquaintance are indignant, and all that call him friend are distressed; whilst his nearest relations are miserable, and his children are squalid from neglect—wretched, perhaps, from want of care—wicked from example; the drunkard sits in the house of crime, at the table of infamy, with his cup of weakness—his draught of poison—before him, and is there contending with his brother drunkard which shall most defame himself: which shall show the greatest folly, which shall exhibit the meanest baseness, which shall best shatter his nerves, and destroy his nature, and abuse and anger their common Lord and Creator.

St. Chrysostom has well described the effects of intemperance—“Paleness, weakness, laziness, folly.” Pale, hanging cheeks, red ulcered eyes, trembling hands, furious dreams, restless distracted sleep: like murderers and persons of an affrighted conscience, so broken, so sick, so disorderly are the slumbers of the drunkard who wakes to misery. Shew me a temperate man, and I will shew you a prudent man; shew me a temperate man, and I will shew you a virtuous man; shew me a temperate man, and I will shew you a prosperous man; shew me a temperate man, and I will point out to you a wise man. For intemperance is the root of folly: intemperance is the seed of madness: intemperance is the fountain of uncleanness: intemperance is the well-head of injustice: intemperance is the poison spring of unbelief: intemperance is the stream where each virtue drowns herself: intemperance is the cloud of fleshly vapour which rises over and darkens all the soul. “*Wine,*” say the Proverbs, “*is a luxurious thing, and drunkenness, riotousness. Whosoever is delighted therewith shall not be*

wise." "*Wine drunken with excess,*" says Ecclesiasticus, "*is bitterness to the soul.*" "*The heat of drunkenness is the stumbling-block of the soul, lessening strength and causing wounds.*" Yes, lessening strength. There is an idea abroad that strong drink strengthens. Never was there a more fatal error. All stimulants to excitement when taken to excess, strengthen at the moment, but leave the body weaker ever after. "*Look not then,*" says the wise man, "*on the liquor when it is yellow; when it sparkleth in the glass, it goeth in pleasantly, but in the end it will bite like a snake, and spread abroad poison like a basilisk.*" Like the honey with the sting in it, both go down together. The sweetness soon leaves the palate, but the sting has only commenced its work.

See the drunkard begin, but watch him till he ends his career of intoxication. He has sat at table; he has filled his cups; he has invoked the companions of his guilty joy. His mirth has maddened into riot, then fevered into criminal passion, then lowered into obscene drivel, then sunk into stupor. He has uttered folly, and thought it wisdom; he has profused curses where he should have uttered blessings; he has poured out filth, and mistaken it for wit; the Christian has now left the scene, and human nature is fast following him; reason fades away as folly grows more boisterous; the madness of folly glides off too, and stupidity remains the only companion of drunken insanity. The room reels; the table moves; the man has fallen away, and a beast lies in his place. And even this brute is dead, all but the throat and belly, and these are sickly. Like the banquet of Sisera, it ends with driving a nail through the man's head. The very infidel, who in old times wrote against Christianity, could say this much of drunkenness—"That it knocks down the man, and nails him to the sensual intermixtures of the body."

What man loves to be despised? Which of you will endure patiently the contempt of another? And yet every drunkard crowns his head with mighty scorn. Putting himself beneath the lowest; degrading himself under the meanest. The boys laugh at him, children hoot him, and the criminal scorn him, as he is led home like the cripple, lisping the imperfect noises of an infant, or babbling with a full and spongy tongue, an empty head, a foolish heart. Woe and alas! God of heaven! Dare I appeal to Thee from amidst such a scene! Thy creatures too! Whither has thy image departed from them! To see a sensible man dishonour himself like the foolish; disgrace his friends like the impious; impoverish his family like the unjust; bring degradation on those who are dearest to him like the heartless, bring reproach on religion like the profane; destroy his body like the murderer, and his soul like the infidel; become an appellation of scorn and a scene of derision to all, and of forgetfulness to himself. Where, O God, is thy image in this man! Where, Divine Lord, are the marks of his baptism! Where, sacred heavens, are the features of your child! And call you yourself still a Christian? And name you yourself yet a man? Where then are the commands of the Gospel? Where the precepts of the Church? Where, even the laws of nature, the ties of humanity, and the instincts of self-preservation?

You have not gone so far, you are perhaps ready to tell me. You have not come to these excesses. Nor are you so abandoned, the heavens forbid, in your excesses. No. But you have made a beginning nevertheless. But you have already gone a certain extent—you feel yourself going further. And where, and when did the drunkard ever stop, and say, “I will go no further,” and did not go further: unless death, in compassion, destroyed him in the flower, before he had ripened into all those fruits which I have described? Drunkenness is a vice

which the more it is indulged, the more the palate sickens and languishes; the less the appetite enjoys, from its satiety, the more it craves. Providence has kindly limited the possible extent of indulging this degrading habit, or it would never stop till it had, as far as possible, turned every thing salutary and healing in nature, into the means of self-destruction.

You have not gone to all the excesses which the constitution of your nature will allow of. But you have sown the seeds of those excesses. The habit is already, perhaps, planted within you; it has reached a certain bulk; it is increasing; it is striking its roots deeper and broader; it is entwining its fibres more closely round your heart; you have no effectual will to stop its progress: it will allow of no check unless plucked out altogether: it will of itself make increase—the difficulty of rooting out the habit is weekly greater by its weekly growth. Nothing grows upon human nature like that most abject of its propensities, that most degrading of its habits—drunkenness. And is it not a law of our fallen nature, that the grossest and rankest productions grow most rife and abundant with the least care? If then you have not reached all those excesses, you are in the way to them; and your readiness to excuse yourself is the surest proof that you love the vice; and that, unless arrested in your career, by that cold hand which stops all our vices and brings them to their punishment, you will yet exhibit yourself a spectacle of all those excesses: deprived of the powers of body and mind; a mere living vegetable corruption; your soul dead and entombed within your body, and your body itself with only a few useless organs left to be destroyed. Not in the grave indeed, but still on this side of it, only to infect and afflict every thing near you with wretchedness. And if the drunkard finished in his vice be such a spectacle before man on earth, what must he be to the just made perfect? What, before those Angels of Light, who look down

upon human deeds? What, to the sacred eyes of Him who dying redeemed our wickedness? What, to the all-pervading contemplation of the omnipotent God? Will he not again at this spectacle be moved inwardly, and repent that He ever made man? And if he does not again send a deluge to destroy him here, will He not reserve him for the deluge of fire, which will not be quenched? “*Do not err,*” says St. Paul, “*neither fornicators, nor the servers of idols, nor adulterers, nor the unclean, nor thieves, nor misers, NOR DRUNKARDS, nor cursers, nor plunderers, shall possess the kingdom of God.*” Into what a crowd St. Paul casts the drunkard. With the impure, with idolaters, with harlots, with adulterers, with cursers, with misers, with plunderers. What! some proud mind is ready to ask me, is the drunkard one with the impure? Is the drunkard one with the idolater? Do not object, O man! You have heard the Divine laws. Do not interrogate me. Ask the Apostle, and he will still answer you, that both are equally shut out from the Kingdom of God. As this then is clear, why need you ask me to take measure of the enormity of your sin? As he stands without the gates, as he is excluded from the possession, as he is lost to salvation, as he is consigned to eternal torments; why need you reach to me the scales and weights to balance and show the proportion of iniquity between these vices? And why so anxious to ascertain the enormity of drunkenness, separate and alone, when it is never to be found alone, and unaccompanied by some, if not all, this crowd of horrid crimes? Is not drunkenness the fertile mother in whose womb all those vices are engendered? Are they not the accursed offspring of this accursed parent? And shall not the mother-vice carry the curses of her brood? Go to the house of the drunkard. Consider his family. Look at his affairs. Listen to the sounds that proceed from the house of drunkenness, and the house of infamy, as you pass. Survey the insecurity of the public ways and of the night.

streets. Go to the hospital, to the house of charity, and the bed of wretchedness. Enter the courts of justice, the prison and the condemned cell. Look at the haggard features of the ironed criminal. Ask all these why they exist to distress you? and you will every where be answered by tales and recitals of the effects of drunkenness. And the miseries, and the vices, and the sorrows, and the scenes of suffering which have harrowed up your soul, were, almost without exception, either prepared by drinking, or were undergone for procuring the means of satisfying this vice, and the vices which spring from it.

Mere intoxication is but the starting-post of the drunkard's course. To what a train of roads does drunkenness point, like some portentous finger-post, erected upon earth by the infernal powers to conduct to their dominions. Drunkenness—dissoluteness, debauchery, disease, the hospital, death. Drunkenness—evil company, cursing, swearing, gambling, profanity, infidelity, death in impenitence. Drunkenness—idleness, carelessness, destruction of property, ruin of family, poverty, destitution, death in abandonment. Drunkenness—riotousness, quarrelling, injuries, insults, inhuman fightings, sudden death. Drunkenness—lawless companions, thefts, robberies, plots, murders, the gaol, the iron gang, the gallows. Drunkenness—weakness, gloominess, wretchedness, melancholy, wild fantasies, black horrors, madness.

These are but a few of the courses of the drunkard. But, whilst the drunkard himself totters or crawls along his destined path to his destined end—without a sense of his shame, or a feeling of his condition, or a regard to his friends, or a thought for his family, or a reflection towards his soul, or one glimpse of his destination—is God silent? Are the heavens without knowledge? Does no eye see? And no hand take note? God is silent, but not inactive. The silence of God is the sinner's worst punishment. He no longer troubles the conscience;

He has ceased to warn; He is silent. He contemplates the drunkard's course, patiently collecting His wrath, like smouldering fire, and His vengeance, like black clouds, into His bosom: why should *He* be in haste? God's time is eternity; and still as the drunkard heaps crimes, God heaps vengeance. Why should *He* hurry? God is all-powerful. What can escape him? The hour comes, and the tempest of God bursts. Why should it be visibly? There are other drunkards to be handled by the same judgment. Hear Himself, speaking by the mouth of Isaias—“*I have been silent, I have held my peace, I was patient; my words shall break forth as one in labour, I will scatter them; I will wrap them up together in a whirlpool!*” But the hour is not yet come, though every cup of intoxication hurries it; on goes the drunkard, thoughtless, senseless, despised, to his destruction. Look at that creature, how can I call him man, when he has lost all the qualities of manhood? See him as he staggers on his way; his frame shaken with excess; his head failing, floating heavily on his body, or falling over his side; his squalid appearance; his mouth of folly; his eyes of wild, guilty insanity; his unmeaning look; his incapable fury. He has come from the house of drunkenness. All that can be done for him, for some time to come, is to treat him like a helpless idiot; to put him to his bed, if possible, until he recovers his existence, and a feeling of melancholy, jaded wretchedness of mind and body, which he again seeks to drown and forget in another fit of intoxication; until he at length rounds out his miserable remnant of life, and is dissolved in the grave. Look at that fury. She, once, was a woman; dear to some; beloved by many; amiable to all. See that face, once meek and lovely with the pure beams of innocence, now convulsed with all the diabolical passions which issue from the infernal pit. Harken to the impure, obscene, ungodly flow of her lips. She, too, has come from the house

of drunkenness, and is hastening to the den of infamy ; or, like some unnatural monster, is going home to her family to suckle her children with her vices. See that young man. At present, he is honest, useful, thriving ; esteemed by his friends, and respected by all who know him. But he is entering the house of drunkenness. He reads his lessons in the school of vice ; and every one is beginning to be uneasy with apprehension ; to look towards his future ; to prophesy his course, and give him over as lost. He begins to suspect himself neglected, then to feel himself disregarded, then to know himself deserted, then abandoned, then shunned ; and he reasons foolishly on the subject, for he has drunk the wine of madness, and abandons himself.

I know of no disorder so difficult of cure as the disease of confirmed drunkenness. Few recover. The vice, become habitual, has eaten away too much of their mind and reason to leave sufficient nerve and vigour for a strong and steadfast resolution. Far be it from me to discourage even those who have gone so deep. There are sufficient examples to show that they *may* recover, if they *will* but take the means. But I must not dissemble the truth. I would warn the beginner, and those who are tempted to begin. I would entreat them to consider how difficult and rare it is to recover into habits of sobriety after having reached a certain point. Let the beginner draw instruction in time. Let him take to himself thought ; arrest the beginnings ; pluck out the habit whilst its roots are young and green, and shield himself with caution. Let him draw lessons from bad, as well as from good examples. There was a nation of Heathens, the ancient Spartans, who held this vice in such horror, that though they never drank to excess themselves, they intoxicated their slaves, that they might show their children, by example, to what a condition drunkenness brings our

nature. You, alas! have no occasion for such an expedient. In every street and on every road, men calling themselves Christians will read you this lesson: the land reels with drunkenness. Consider it well and take profit to yourselves. Turn over in your mind the anathemas of the apostle, and the woes of the prophet, until they inscribe themselves in your heart, and the fear of them becomes a portion of your being. Mark them written on the brow of the drunkard. Watch him in his career, until you see them all accomplished. Write them over your door, inscribe them over your chimney-piece, in your chamber, on your table, in the bottom of every glass; utter them in your devotions; hear them in the sounds of every tavern as you pass; and read them on every sign-board. Better you should pass your whole time in studying the woes of drunkenness, than spend your life in feeling them, and your eternity in suffering for them.

Do you ask me, how you are to break yourself from this degrading habit? The general rule is very simple. Have a willing mind: shun the occasion: fly idleness. Fix for yourself a measure in your friendly domestic meetings, beyond which you are never, whatever be the occasion, to exceed; and never see the inside of a tavern. Be fully assured that you cannot go beyond your measure, however little, on one occasion, without going beyond it always. Consider in what places and with what persons you are most tempted, and avoid them. *"Those that love the danger shall perish in it."* Let no motive, no wish to appear hospitable, no cruel invitations, no pressings of seeming friendship, induce you to forget the friendship which you owe yourself. Repeat your resolution each morning when you rise, and pray for strength to keep it. Examine how you have kept your engagement each evening when you go to rest. If you have failed once, be not discouraged: try again.

Nothing delights the eye of heaven more than to see us wrestling manfully with our infirmities ; rising courageously after our falls ; drawing humility from our weaknesses, and caution and strength from our humiliation. Only he who gives up in despair is conquered. Renew your resolution—strengthen it with prayer ; observe the occasion of your past fall, and remove it. The last advice which I shall give you is one of great importance. Put yourself, with all obedience, under the guidance of a spiritual director. There is a sort of fascination about this vice which often renders the drunkard powerless for his own deliverance ; temptation acts upon him like a charm ; he requires the hand of another to free himself from her enchantment. Fly, then, to your pastor. The grace of God will not be wanting. And let the consolations and the blessing of a conscience healed, of health recovered, of character restored, of affairs retrieved, of a family made happy, of friends returning with gladdened hearts, of the revival of life now, and the future hopes which await your redemption from intemperance, be your encouragement.

THE END.







